

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

Therefore, I one finds, sir, that family needs, even though I choose only those of Quebec, as an example, become alarmingly greater.

That is why there is only one imperative solution and the initiative is a matter of urgency: the family allowances scheme must be amended without delay if hardship and poverty are to be fought effectively in this country.

At the last federal-provincial conference of Ministers of Health and Welfare in January 1966, the representatives of five provinces at least called for such a revision: those of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Newfoundland.

If Ottawa delays any longer, the provinces which will take action will not be to blame. Hon. René Lévesque announced at that conference that Quebec would take action shortly in this field if the central government failed to do so.

Besides, it is to be wondered whether the administration of this program should not be entrusted to the provinces. Any province would then be free to set up within its boundaries a better comprehensive scheme including every aspect of social security.

It already seems as if the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) sees no objection to the provinces handling the distribution of family allowances. This attitude became apparent during an interview with parliamentary correspondent Charles Lynch over the English network of the C.B.C. on January 18, 1966.

It would seem, however, that the federal Minister of Health has no desire whatever that Ottawa should abandon the administration of family allowances.

As far as I am concerned, Mr. Chairman, I feel that this problem is under provincial responsibility, because it is an area touching upon social and educational fields. The constitution of 1867, in its spirit and in its wording mainly under chapters 92 and 93, gives the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over social and educational matters.

The fact that Ottawa entered this field of action in 1944 by not giving the provinces their fiscal revenue does not mean that the federal government was constitutionally empowered to do this.

It must be pointed out here that Ottawa passed its legislation on family allowances without first using a constitutional amendment. It proceeded differently with regard to unemployment insurance in 1940 and old age pensions in 1951.

[Mr. Allard.]

In fact, the federal Family Allowances Act of 1944, as that of 1964, which provides for payment of allowances to children, in addition to dealing with social needs, constitutes indirect interference in the field of education, since a child must go to school in order to be eligible for the allowance.

Therefore, it would be to Ottawa's advantage—and it would have plenty of time to do it—to devote itself to the national and international matters specifically mentioned in the constitution and to hand back to the provinces the responsibility for and the administration of family allowances.

While waiting for that development to take place, since it is urgent to amend the system of family allowances, we must ask ourselves what should be the social philosophy behind such a change.

Family allowances are related to the essence of human dignity and social welfare. The state should especially encourage its younger citizens and support the family, which is truly the basic cell of society.

As the taxpayers supply the amounts of money the state distributes, it is fitting that, in this field, the plan should be universal, just as in the case of old age pensions, health insurance and superannuation plans.

However, it is fitting that we should consider various degrees and standards in its application. For instance, with regard to allowances, family needs can be catalogued. The extent of the needs shall be studied without discrimination. The number of children per family, their age, as well as the father's income, should be taken into consideration. Allowances could be paid according to a realistic and selective scale.

On the basis of these general principles, one can imagine various family allowances schemes.

Whatever the scheme to be adopted by amending the present one, I suggest that the new formula should be comprehensive, in proportion with the number and the age of children, based on needs, not on the simple wish to increase buying power it should take into account the father's income and the increase in the cost of living and it should be accompanied by an adjustment or exemptions concerning income tax legislation.

The new plan, in spite of realistic features, should not eliminate the first child from the benefits. The first child cannot be set aside mathematically. This child does not choose his rank upon his birth and he is a citizen